

8-1-2021

Hello Sublette County, this is Albert Sommers reporting to you from interim work of the 66th Legislature. On July 19-20 the Joint Education Committee met in Saratoga, and on July 19 the Wyoming Wildlife Taskforce met in Casper. I serve on both of these committees, but I cannot be in two places at one time, so I chose to attend the Joint Education Committee meetings in Saratoga.

The purpose of the Wyoming Wildlife Taskforce is to study top-priority wildlife policy issues facing the state related to the allocation of hunting opportunity, sportsperson access, and other issues. Over an 18-month period, topics will be identified by taskforce members for study, with the goal of presenting conclusions and recommendations to the Wyoming Legislature, Game and Fish Commission and Governor to support decision-making on Wyoming's wildlife resources. One recommendation that came from the July 19 meeting is to move license allocation for the Big 5 (bighorn sheep, moose, bison, mountain goat, and grizzly bear) to 90% resident and 10% non-resident from the current 80/20 split. Further, the Taskforce recommends that bighorn sheep and bull moose licenses be once-in-a-lifetime opportunities. The Taskforce also recommends that the Legislature fully fund the Wyoming Wildlife Natural Resource Trust Fund to the \$200 million level. All three of these recommendations will require legislative action. The final recommendation of the Taskforce at the July meeting is that the Feds delist the grizzly bear. All of these recommendations have been debated at previous meetings. I support all of these recommendations, even though I worry about the impact the 90/10 split on the Big 5 will have on Wyoming moose outfitters. The next meeting of the Taskforce will be on September 1, 2021 in Casper, where I hope we continue to discuss the challenges of the preference point system. Remember to provide comment to this taskforce at <https://sites.google.com/wyo.gov/wyomingwildlifetaskforce>.

The Joint Education Committee heard multiple reports, but I believe the committee will take action on two topics: K-3 grade literacy and absenteeism/truancy. K-3 literacy is critical to a child's development. A long-term study by the Annie E. Casey Foundation found that students who were not proficient in reading by the end of third grade were four times more likely than

proficient readers to drop out of high school. In fact, 88 percent of students who failed to earn a high school diploma were struggling readers in third grade. According to documents we received, these struggling students also generally fail to receive the assistance they need to catch up. Educators know this, but should the state require more from districts to ensure early childhood literacy is adequately addressed? We heard testimony that having common, high quality assessments and screening tools will improve outcomes. We also heard that high quality reading intervention requires teachers to be properly trained. I believe the committee will look at these two areas for potential legislation.

We also heard about the need for proper curriculum, but that is outside the Legislature's wheelhouse. The Legislature can identify what subjects need to be taught; the State Board of Education establishes the standards for the subjects taught; and the local school boards decide the curriculum. The Wyoming Constitution, Article 7/ Section 11-Textbooks states "Neither the legislature nor the superintendent of public instruction shall have power to prescribe text books to be used in the public schools." This clearly gives the power to decide curriculum to local school boards. For example, the Legislature has mandated that government and civics including state and federal constitutions be taught, but due to the constraints of the Wyoming Constitution we do not dictate *how* it is taught.

I have always believed that government closest to the people is most responsive to the people. I have always resisted efforts at the legislative level to prohibit or require specific curriculum be taught, because I believe it violates the Wyoming Constitution. Local school board members are elected, and consequently are held accountable by each district's voters. If a district went rogue and violated the trust of the citizens of Wyoming, the Legislature would act, but it would have to be within the constraints of our constitution. I can be reached at [albert@albertsommers.com](mailto:albert@albertsommers.com) with comments or questions.